

Dear Senate Judiciary Members,

I am writing in support of S.208 and S 209. S 208 requires that law enforcement agents in Vermont (whether local, state or federal) all wear identification and remain unmasked except in limited, specific situations. S 209 prohibits arrests in sensitive areas.

The reality of masked agents on our streets is terrifying. This has been highlighted by ICE raids in many of the country's cities and leaves no doubt that this issue is pivotal to public safety. How is a law abiding citizen supposed to know if they are subject to a kidnapping or a legal arrest? The historical parallels are frightening. Law enforcement officers are public servants first and foremost, and having armed, masked people randomly stopping, searching, seizing, and detaining people is not something I associated with a democratic society.

If an individual is actively pursuing medical help, is going to school, or is at court seeking to address a civil issue, detaining an individual in such circumstances is inhumane at best. As a retired high school teacher, the notion that a child or parent could be intimidated or apprehended either in or approaching a school building runs contrary to every value I hold dear. We are better than this. Our democracy is better than this. Vermont needs to stand up and be counted. History will judge us.

Please have the Committee Assistant add my email to the record.

Elizabeth Grout
Newark, VT